

Benjamin Shambaugh and the Intellectual Foundations of Public History

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tradition of amicable business-labor relations enabled leaders on both sides to pull together quickly and to revive a "civic mutuality" that valued the economic welfare of the community as a whole more than the self-interested "victory" of one social group over another in an economic tug of war.

Many years ago in the *Iowa Journal of History*, Samuel P. Hays called for detailed studies of the past that considered the impact of major historical phenomena—such as industrialization—on the social organization and behavior of ordinary men and women. Since then, many historians have addressed such issues, but few studies in recent years have addressed them as thoroughly as this one does. *Claiming the City* is encumbered in places by passages of postmodernist newspeak, such as "the social text of the city was woven from multiple negotiations over power" (7), and slippery generalizations, such as "the geography of the city was both cause and effect of its social tensions" (69), that momentarily diminish the presentation's effectiveness. Nonetheless, the book is a tour de force of exhaustive research and rigorous analysis. If the prose is dense at times, readers' efforts will be rewarded, for they will find insights and interesting information on nearly every page.

Benjamin Shambaugh and the Intellectual Foundations of Public History, by Rebecca Conard. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002. xv, 247 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.95 cloth.

Reviewer Page Putnam Miller is distinguished visiting lecturer at the University of South Carolina. She served from 1980 to 2000 as the executive director of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, the national advocacy office in Washington, DC, for the historical and archival professions.

In *Benjamin Shambaugh and the Intellectual Foundations of Public History*, Rebecca Conard has written a useful and intriguing book. Shambaugh, an Iowa historian of the early twentieth century, is well worth studying. Conard adeptly makes the connections between his thought and career and the national public history movement of this century. A bright, personable young man, Shambaugh advanced quickly from his freshman year at the University of Iowa in 1888 to become a professor and head of the political science department there in 1900. In 1907, less than a decade after his academic appointment, he also became the head of the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI). He remained a pivotal figure in the university and the historical society until his death.

Conard adopts an unusual format to present the career of one of the early advocates of public history. The book has three significantly different components. First, a long opening chapter provides the broad

historical context and analyzes Shambaugh's role on the national scene as an active member of the historical and political science professions. Then, relying heavily on long passages from an unpublished biography of Shambaugh written by Jacob Swisher, one of Shambaugh's students and later an employee at the SHSI, Conard examines Shambaugh's career. The concluding chapter provides an overview of the present public history movement—which focuses on the study, use, and presentation of history in arenas outside of the classroom—and connects Shambaugh's early contributions to current trends.

Conard brings to each section of the book an appreciation of how Shambaugh's scholarly pursuits and his outreach to the public intertwined to provide the intellectual foundations for the public history movement. Conard astutely examines developments within the American Historical Association and the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, which later became the Organization of American Historians. By focusing on Shambaugh's participation on various commissions and committees, she illustrates the rationale and implications of national policies at the state level.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the American Historical Association (AHA) devoted considerable attention to the need to collect and preserve state and local records and to support the work of state and local historical societies. Both initiatives emanated from the ferment of what Edward Eggeston, president of the AHA, defined in his 1900 presidential remarks as the "new history." Frederick Jackson Turner had been at the forefront of the "new history" in relying on access to newly available regional historical records, studying communities and common people, and seeing the value of history for understanding contemporary issues. Conard analyzes the links between the new history, the initiatives of the AHA, and Shambaugh's career.

Maintaining one foot firmly in the university and the other in the SHSI, Shambaugh transformed both the nature of graduate research and the work of the historical society. Under his leadership, the SHSI ceased being a small club for antiquarians and instead became a hub for historical research and publications. Central to Shambaugh's philosophy was a belief in the power of history to engage the citizens of Iowa and the obligation of historians to apply their knowledge outside of the classroom for the greater public good. Thus in 1909 Shambaugh began using the phrase *applied history* with his professional colleagues to connote the way competent historical research and analysis of carefully gathered evidence can inform elected officials and the general public to seek better solutions to current problems. Or, as Shambaugh

sometimes expressed it, history has the capacity to advance the good of the commonwealth.

Under Shambaugh's leadership, the SHSI developed innovative programs based on his fundamental belief in applied history. One such program was an extensive set of publications called the Iowa Applied History Series. It involved the creation of a research laboratory to conduct research on state legislative issues. Through its publications, the program made serious historical scholarship available to the public. Visiting scholars and graduate students researched and wrote monographs on contemporary issues such as roads, election policies, and taxation in light of historical evidence. Shambaugh secured state funding for the program, which served as a research arm for the state legislature. The series brought national attention to the SHSI's work and, by example, Shambaugh was able to show the national professional organizations that it was possible to secure state support for a program that offered historians an opportunity to be directly engaged in public service.

In an engaging concluding chapter, Conard jumps across the decades to conclude that Shambaugh, who died in 1940, would be very much at home in the current public history movement. As in Shambaugh's day, the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes public or applied history continues to be a concern. Today there is also a gulf between practitioners of public history and many who espouse new social history, even though the two have much in common. Yet public history today, as in Shambaugh's time, continues to push history into new areas of inquiry and service.

Conard points out that many associate the beginning of the modern public history movement with the job crisis facing the historical profession in the 1970s, as large numbers of newly minted Ph.D.s were unable to find teaching positions. That view of the origins of the modern public history movement combined with a lack of agreement on what constitute the unifying fundamentals of public history has contributed to a lack of status in academia for public historians. In such a context, it is illuminating to consider the career of Benjamin Shambaugh, who was at the forefront of developing a philosophy of applied history and creating innovative programs that expanded the scope of historical research and programs.

The historical profession and the people of Iowa are indebted to Rebecca Conard for this book, which explores the impressive career of Benjamin Shambaugh and sheds new light on the fundamentals of the public history movement.

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